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Fairfield Chamber marks 60 years

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By Eric Schwartzberg

Staff Writer

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FAIRFIELD — The Fairfield Chamber of Commerce celebrates its 60th anniversary next month, a milestone its members say is a testament to its commitment to the local business community.

Kevin St. Clair, vice president of Ray St. Clair Roofing, said the 60-year-old company relocated to Fairfield in 2000 and joined the chamber in 2002.

"We were part of a different chamber prior to that and it was a treat the first couple of years to see how often they connected with us, for one," St. Clair said. "Whether it be a phone call, an email, a surprise visit, they've stayed consistent in staying in touch with us, which I thought was a breath of fresh air."

In addition, the company noticed business "in its own backyard" increase, something St. Clair partially attributed to the chamber and its relationship with the company.

St. Clair, who said the company became a Sustaining Member in 2004 to help pay for sponsorships above its membership dues, said the way the chamber reaches out to connect with its members is "pretty remarkable."

"(Fairfield Chamber of Commerce President) Kert Radel actually came into our business a couple of years ago after asking for I don't know how many years in a row 'Hey let me come into your sales meetings,'" St. Clair said, noting the visit was an unabashed success that saw Radel discussing his success and helping Ray St. Clair employees overcoming obstacles on a daily basis.

St. Clair also has high praise for Sherry Schuster, the chamber's membership and events sales coordinator, who is "almost like a family member" to the company now.

"She eats, breathes and sleeps Ray St. Clair Roofing," he said. "She's walks around the town with our jacket on, is always checking in on me to ask 'How's business?' She's always looking to promote your business. You just don't get that out of every chamber that's out there."

Joani Bonaminio said Jungle Jim's International Market is "a proud member" of the Fairfield Chamber of Commerce, which she said has been "a staunch promoter" of the business throughout its more than four decades in Fairfield.

She lauded chamber president Kert Radel for his help and support in promoting the market's 40th birthday celebration last August.

"The chamber has helped to stimulate a vibrant local economy and to create a cooperative environment, which in turn, enhances the quality of life here in Fairfield," said Bonaminio, the wife of the store's founder, Jim Bonaminio. "We at the Jungle are proud to stand alongside this great community resource that works so hard to make Fairfield a better place to live and work."

Kendra Snelling of CK Customs, which has been open at 171 Donald Drive for the last eight years, said the chamber's influence on her business in the three years she's been a member has been immeasurable.

Thanks to the chamber's involvement, CK Customs, which specializes in custom printing, handling everything from T-shirt printing to small quantities of promotional items and name badges, saw its profits rise by at least 50 percent thanks to its chamber membership, Snelling said.

"They promote me a lot, so that gets my name out there for people to know and learn about my business," she said. "I feel like they're an extra family to me."

Dan Goebel, chairman of Receptions Conference Center since 1992, said the business has been a chamber member for 23 years, growing from one room, 7,000 square feet and about \$200,000 in revenues to 25,000 square feet in its Fairfield location, six locations in the Tri-State and more than \$6 million a year in revenues.

"I have nothing but good things to say about the chamber," Goebel said. "When we initially joined, the networking process helped us to break into the business community and the community in general. They do a good job with promotion of business and in particular ... promotion of entrepreneurs and small businesses."

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Fairfield Chamber of Commerce's 60th Anniversary Dinner

WHERE: Receptions Conference Center, 5975 Boymel Drive, Fairfield

WHEN: Registration and social hour from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. March 16. Buffet dinner and program from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

COST: \$60 per person

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Jim Scott, former WLW Cincinnati all-time radio personality; Marconi Award Winner for Radio Personality (2002)

DEADLINE FOR RSVP: March 11

MORE INFO: Call 513-881-5500 or visit www.fairfieldchamber.com.

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